

REPORT OF THE WESTON TOWN MEETING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Madam Moderator:

The members of the Weston Town Meeting Advisory Committee (WTMAC) whose names appear below (16 out of our 18 voting members) submit this majority report of our deliberations and recommendations as to how to improve our Town Meetings. As background, you convened WTMAC last January inviting interested residents to meet to examine various issues related to the functioning of Town Meetings. Specifically, you asked four questions of us:

- Is there a better way to prepare citizens to vote on the issues?
- Is there a way to encourage people to go to the polls and attend Town Meeting?
- Are there protocols during Town Meeting that can balance the need to hear a range of opinions and to make timely progress on the issues at hand?
- Finally, can the office of the Moderator be modified to encourage candidates to run and to prepare new Moderators for their role?

We note that in answering these questions, most of our recommendations are within the Moderator's authority to implement, but others are more appropriately addressed by the Board of Selectmen or other town committees and boards. For matters outside the Moderator's scope of authority, we hope this Report can serve to facilitate a dialogue across town about how to make our Town Meetings more meaningful.

While this report attempts to discuss the areas of our debate and disagreement, two minority reports are being filed with this report and found at Attachment 1.¹

I. Initial Deliberations – Committee Structure, Authority and Process

We spent our first several meetings focusing on issues related to our structure, purpose and authority, and process.

A. Structure.

Our first order of business was to elect officers. We elected Tom Crane as Chairman, Alex Shimada-Brand as Vice-Chairman, and Beverly Foster as Secretary.

The committee's structure is unusual for town committees in that all interested residents who expressed interest by the date of our first meeting in early February 2012 were invited to serve without further qualification. In addition, the Finance Committee, School Board, Board of Selectmen, and League of Women's Voters were invited to send a member to serve in an *ex officio* capacity. Except with respect to the School Board, whose member only participated at

¹ The first minority report is written by Isabella Jancourtz, and signed onto by Patricia Siek and Virginia Ward. The second minority report is written by Bill Sandalls and Henry Viles, and signed onto by Isabella Jancourtz, Patricia Siek and Virginia Ward. Bill Sandalls and Henry Viles are not signing onto the majority report.

the first meeting, all other committees sent members who actively and regularly participated. In addition, because we are a committee reporting to the Moderator, you served in an *ex officio*, non-voting capacity.

The structure of accepting all volunteers had both benefits and drawbacks. We considered whether to impose committee rules regarding the admission of new members and continued qualification of membership. We agreed at the outset to close-off membership as of our first meeting without a vote of then-existing members.² After extensive discussion, the committee declined to impose any further requirements, such as attendance record, for continued committee membership.

B. Purpose and Authority of the Committee.

We devoted the first several meetings to allowing each member time to speak and identify issues related to Town Meeting that they wanted the committee to address. It soon became clear that each member is devoted to the historic institution of New England Town Meeting. Within that broad consensus, however, it became equally clear that members had very different priorities and particular interests and concerns.

The committee extensively discussed whether it was constituted with sufficient authority. In response to a request from a committee member, on February 13, 2012 town counsel wrote an opinion on the authority of the Moderator to convene an advisory committee. In brief, counsel concluded that the Moderator has such authority to advise her on matters within the jurisdiction of that office, but cautioned us on the limits of that authority, for example for the committee to deliberate on matters within the authority of the Selectmen or Finance Committee. We considered the question whether the committee should seek from Town Meeting the assent to the formation of WTMAC and clarification of our purpose, but we voted not to take this step.

C. Process Issues.

We considered various process issues. The town manager advised us that we were subject to the Open Meeting Law, and provided the committee with compliance guidance and education on these requirements at our February 28th meeting. To avoid any uncertainty of the applicability of the Open Meeting Law, the committee voted to be bound by this law. The Secretary collected from all members their signed certification page required by the Attorney General. Nevertheless, we struggled with Open Meeting Law compliance in our e-mail communications between meetings. We instituted various internal rules to restrict our use of e-mails for matters that could potentially be construed as improper committee deliberations in violation of the Open Meeting Law. We voted to have our deliberations bound by Roberts Rules of Order, but notwithstanding, the sense of the Committee was that the Chairman should use these rules flexibly. The Chairman announced his intention to seek consensus wherever possible.

² Subsequent to this vote, the committee voted to admit one additional member because of her attendance record and obvious interest in the deliberations of the committee.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

To assist us in making informed recommendations, we reviewed various town meeting data from Weston and other Massachusetts peer towns. See Attachment 2.³ In addition several committee members volunteered to attend spring Town Meetings in Bedford, Concord, Lincoln, Maynard, Natick, Wayland and Hartford (Vermont). The committee received verbal and written reports from these members. See Attachment 3. Although the committee found this information to be helpful, there was a consensus that because so many towns have their unique traditions, our focus would remain on our own Town Meeting practices. But to the extent the practices of other towns are relevant, they are discussed below in each section.

A. Introductory Observations and Overall Recommendations

As Alex De Tocqueville observed, “Town Meeting is to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people’s reach, they teach men how to use it and how to enjoy it.”⁴ Or as the Rockefeller Report on American Democracy found:

“There are aspirations behind the town-meeting conception of democracy, however, which must be recognized as indelible parts of the democratic creed. The town-meeting conception of democracy is an idealized way of expressing the democratic hope that those who are governed will be able to reach those who govern them, that they will be able to make their voices heard where it counts and will be recognized as persons and not as faceless cogs in an efficient machine. It speaks for the belief that a society is safer and freer when the bulk of its citizens understand the programs and goals that their government has chosen and when they have achieved this understanding because these programs and goals have been honestly debated in public.”⁵

Within that framework of understanding so well expressed by others, we emphasize the vital deliberative function of Town Meeting. While no specific committee votes were taken, there was strong consistent consensus that one of the most important functions of Town Meeting is that every citizen must be able to feel that this is the place where he or she can be heard. In this process, the views of the minority must be scrupulously protected. While we do recommend that the Moderator should remind speakers to be respectful of all in attendance by not rambling or merely repeating what others have said, within that context, any sentiments that Town Meeting should proceed “efficiently” should take a back seat to these other higher goals. Once everyone has had the opportunity to be heard, the Moderator should ensure that a vote is accurately and fairly taken because at that time the will of the majority becomes binding on all.

Because of the vital importance of Town Meeting, we are concerned there are barriers to its effective functioning. Many of our comments and recommendations about these problems are

³ Some of the data in Attachment 2 is updated from that reviewed by the committee.

⁴ *Democracy in America*, 61 (Bradley ed. 1945); quoted in *Town Meeting Time*, Third Ed., § 1 (History), Massachusetts Moderators Association.

⁵ *Rockefeller Report on American Democracy: The Power of the Democratic Idea*, 39-41(1960); quoted in *Town Meeting Time*, § 1.

discussed fully below. We note here our concern that there is a certain mystery to average voters about some parts of Town Meeting's seemingly arcane rules and procedures, for example, those that specify that Town Meeting actually starts at the polls the Saturday before voters come to meet,⁶ and that few committee members understand the difference between our Annual Town Meetings and Special Town Meetings or why separate Warrants are issued for each when two such meetings are held the same day.⁷

A substantial majority of the committee voted that our Town Meetings basically function well, but modest improvements are needed, which are discussed more fully below. None of our recommendations need to be implemented through bylaw changes. To the extent our recommendations are found to be modest, this may be a reflection of the views of the majority that Town Meeting is basically working well. Importantly however, several members believe that more fundamental changes are needed to Town Meeting and that the Selectmen's recently formed bylaw committee should consider, for example, changing the day of Town Meeting, perhaps to Saturdays, instituting remote electronic voting, and changing away from our form of open Town Meeting (all registered voters may vote) to representative Town Meeting members.

We recommend that the next Moderator consider creating a new standing advisory committee to meet at such times the Moderator deems appropriate and consider the following functions, the list of which is not intended to be exhaustive:

- In advance of each Town Meeting –
 - Assist in recommending the order of warrant articles;
 - Assist with the publicity for Town Meeting;
 - Assist the Moderator in efforts to encourage voters wishing to speak at Town Meeting to contact her/him in advance;
 - Discuss upcoming issues that would help the Moderator calibrate the extent of debate or controversy on warrant articles;
 - Assist with the display of materials at the information tables;
 - Assist with the organization of refreshments;
 - Assist with the organization of day care; and
 - Assist with transportation to Town Meeting.
- At Town Meeting – At the entrance, serve as an informal welcoming committee and make themselves available to answer voter questions.

⁶ See 2012 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Article 1.

⁷ Commentary in Town Meeting Time suggests that our practice is unnecessary and that matters we consider at our Special Town Meetings (budgetary matters for the current fiscal year) may be considered at the Annual Town Meeting. See Town Meeting Time § 21.

- After each Town Meeting –
 - Review the deliberations on the Warrant Articles, for example the written information and presentations, with a particular focus on whether voters were meaningfully informed about the fundamental questions raised; and
 - Review on an ongoing basis barriers to greater participation at Town Meetings.

B. Is There A Better Way To Prepare Citizens To Vote On The Issues?

We respectfully note that a more complete answer to this first question would require us to make recommendations that extend beyond the Moderator's jurisdiction. Our recommendations try to be respectful that we are a Moderator's committee and that the Selectman, Finance Committee, and School Committee, to name just a few, have not asked for our views. Nevertheless, it is inescapable that implementation of some of our recommendations spill over into the jurisdiction of other town offices, boards and committees, and we ask that the Moderator distribute this Report widely within the town and ask that our recommendations be considered.

Warrant. The Warrant Articles related to the town budget are likely the most important votes of Town Meeting. They are typically subject to little debate and approved overwhelmingly. No doubt, this is a function of the confidence of voters in those who have put countless committee hours into the process and relative satisfaction with the services we purchase with our tax dollars. Nevertheless, we cannot dismiss the possibility that some part of these short deliberations and outcome is the result of the manner and substance of presentations of budget information at Town Meeting, including that found in the Warrant. As a result, we recommend that the Moderator forward to the Selectmen and Finance Committee, among other committees that seek to spend taxpayer funds, for their consideration that they ask the question whether the presentations they make to Town Meeting and materials included in the Warrant fully and fairly inform the voters of the information needed to make informed decisions at Town Meeting. Among the questions they may wish to consider include, for example –

- Whether they meaningfully describe their priorities. *See, e.g.* Selectmen's Budget Principles.⁸
- Whether they meaningfully describe key issues they are addressing. *See, e.g.* Key Financial Issues Facing the Town.⁹
- Whether the short explanation of each Article meaningfully informs voters about the matter at hand, including whether they describe significant alternatives that were considered. For example, as part of a recommendation to expend taxpayer funds on a new building, why were renovations rejected, or why the size could not be significantly smaller than that proposed. We note the sparse presentation of

⁸ 2012 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, p. 11.

⁹ *Id.*

alternatives in the budget discussion in the 2012 Warrant and explanations of each budget-related Article.

- Whether they describe the short- and long-range tax rate impact of a recommendation. *See, e.g.* Property Tax Impact of a Proposed Budget.¹⁰
- Whether they provide website links to more detailed information. We note the very limited use of such links in the 2012 Warrant.

We recognize that the annual budget is virtually a year long-process and for voters to be fully informed about many important budget issues, they need to participate in the many meetings and forums that take place well before Town Meeting. We encourage the Selectmen and the many town committees and boards that have authority over the town fisc to take greater steps to encourage wider voter participation and to publicize their many meetings. But a more complete set of recommendations along these lines is outside of the scope of authority of the Moderator and this committee. We nevertheless wish to encourage Weston residents to discuss and examine how much we spend and why.

Most of these comments and recommendations apply with equal force to the many non-budget-related Articles that are placed in the Warrant. We are concerned that the information in the non-budget-related Warrant Articles and presentations at Town Meeting in many cases do not provide voters with sufficiently meaningful information (including for example, priorities, alternatives considered, and availability through website links of where more complete information can be found) to make informed decisions about the matters at hand.

We recognize it is not within the jurisdiction of the Moderator to edit the content of Warrant Articles, but we nevertheless strongly encourage the Moderator to initiate this dialogue because of its ultimate importance to what is the whole point of what we do at Town Meeting.

Publicity. Several steps should be considered to better publicize Town Meeting and the issues in the Warrant.¹¹

- We note that the League of Women Voters plays a key role in providing information about Town Meetings and elections, for example the League often holds Saturday morning coffee hours at the library a week or two before the Annual Town Meeting to discuss some of the controversial issues on the Warrant, and also usually holds a Candidates' Night the last week in April, where controversial town issues are discussed.
- The use of the Town's mobile road flashing signs announcing the May Town Meeting was helpful, although the Committee notes that communications logistics need to be improved to enable the Moderator to post announcements easily. We note that these signs were not used for the November Town Meeting.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 13.

¹¹ These recommendations also apply to meetings of other boards and committees, especially where budget issues are discussed. For example, several members observed that the town's budget hearing is often not well-attended, yet important, useful information can be found at these hearings.

- The availability of rides to and of child care at Town Meeting should be better publicized.
- Other available local sources should be used to better advertise Town Meeting and the Warrant Articles. These sources include the Town website, Town Crier, WestonGrapevine, Weston Media Center, and Weston Patch.

Town Website. The Town's website presents numerous opportunities that warrant a more thorough evaluation:

- The Town website should more prominently announce upcoming Town Meetings. For example, as of November 18th, approximately one week before the November 26th Special Town Meeting, the only notice of the meeting on the homepage was as the 10th listing under the heading News and Events.
- The website should have a substantially more robust and visible Town Meeting and Elections webpage that is available on the home page and that better identifies issues and other resources for voters, for example through weblinks, all in an effort to better educate voters about the Warrant issues. A screenshot of this current webpage is found at Attachment 4.¹²
- The Moderator's webpage should be reviewed for similar enhancements.
- The website should also have more weblinks to provide the capability to find and review important content of committee meetings online (for example, audio, podcasts and video) when it is convenient for voters. The Wayland town website is an example of such enhanced resources.
- We note with approval the substantial improvement made in the past few months by the Town's website administrator to the Financial Information page¹³ which provides various important linked information, including to the new Financial Primer prepared by the Moderator in response to various deliberations of this committee. In addition, we note that the Community Preservation page has new information about the Community Preservation Act, projects and funding, along with important linked information.¹⁴
- The town of Stowe, MA does something similar in the form of a complete voters' guide booklet.
- The Selectmen should weigh the budgetary costs in creating a more robust website.

¹² Available at: http://www.weston.govoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={D89C1044-A7C1-4A83-A396-1570FAB0718F} (last visited November 24, 2012).

¹³ http://www.weston.govoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={8757C109-0E43-4732-8F65-25A4D2BF29D1}&DE=.

¹⁴ http://www.weston.govoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={760B4E40-D889-46DD-8349-02E1169D61D7}.

C. Is There A Way To Encourage People To Go To The Polls And Attend Town Meeting?

We devoted substantial attention to the chronic problem of low voter participation at Town Meetings. We note that attendance at Annual and Special Town meetings in the past two years has averaged 311 people or 4.0% of registered voters.¹⁵ We formed no consensus as to the precise hurdles to greater voter participation, and some members believe that low turnout is not necessarily a problem because at Town Meetings attendance increases dramatically when significant issues are being discussed.

There is substantial consensus that residents should be polled with a survey that helps identify the reasons for low voter turnout and potential solutions to improve the functioning of Town Meeting. Because of limitations of our authority and lack of a budget, we did not conduct this survey, but we strongly urge the new Selectmen's bylaw committee to conduct such a survey and for the Selectmen to find sufficient funds in the budget for this project. Such a survey could also seek information on the following other subjects, with this list not intended to be exhaustive:

- As discussed in subsection A above, various questions can be asked of voters about the quality and sufficiency of materials and presentation made at Town Meeting and whether improved information will permit voters to come better prepared and/or lead to increased attendance;
- Would such items as refreshments, day care, and transportation induce greater attendance;
- Would a different day and/or time for Town Meeting induce greater attendance; and
- What other barriers to attendance exist.

The following are a mix of steps we recommend be taken to encourage people to attend Town Meeting. These recommendations below are in addition to the recommendations we make in the section immediately above related to publicity and the town's website.

Child Care. Acting on the recommendation of the Committee, the Moderator worked to re-establish child care at the May Town Meeting. The Moderator identified several logistical issues with this service, including the expense of arranging for a room and night janitor, coordinating with the High School to get volunteer students, and publicity. Notwithstanding these efforts, the service was not used at the May Town Meeting. Nevertheless, the Committee recommends this service continue. Consistent expectations of the availability of this service will increase its use over time. In subsection D below, we discuss the issue of young children attending Town Meeting. We note here that the availability of on-site child care at Town Meetings can help provide a meaningful alternative for voters among the other choices of not coming at all or bringing young children into the auditorium.

As discussed in subsection A above, part of our recommendation for the creation of a new Moderator's advisory committee is for this committee to take on this function.

¹⁵ Attendance at second days of Annual Town Meetings excluded. See Attachment 2.

Transportation. The League of Women Voters and Council on Aging have occasionally provided free rides to Town Meeting. This service should be consistently made available and better advertised. High school students should be encouraged to offer this service as well. The town-wide survey we are recommending should ask whether the greater availability of this service will help increase attendance at Town Meetings.

Food/Drink. Although the High School does not permit food or drink in the auditorium itself, the Committee still believes that offering refreshments in the outer hall is a good idea. Again, we recommend that the Moderator's permanent advisory committee consider taking on this function.

Orientation. There was a consensus that the Moderator should consider providing an orientation prior to Town Meeting, especially for new voters.¹⁶ In the past, the Moderator spoke in the first few minutes of Town Meeting to address perceived concerns of those unfamiliar with the workings of Town Meeting and Roberts Rules of Order, and offer assistance to anyone who wished to address an issue to speak but was uncomfortable for any reason. One committee member attending Town Meeting in Concord noted that that town has a good website and several pages of information are handed out at Town Meeting explaining the process.¹⁷

Day of Town Meetings. Because of the concern that this fall's Special Town Meeting was held the day immediately following the Thanksgiving holiday, we voted unanimously to recommend to the Selectmen that in selecting the date for Special Town Meetings consideration should be giving to days when it is likely to have the greatest attendance.

D. Are There Protocols During Town Meeting That Can Balance The Need To Hear A Range Of Opinions And To Make Timely Progress On The Issues At Hand?

The Committee viewed this question in a more expansive way and addressed numerous issues all related to the question how to improve the functioning of Town Meeting itself.

1. Issues Addressed in the Town Meeting Guide.

We devoted a significant amount of time, both before and after the May Town Meeting, to making improvements to the pamphlet "A Brief Guide to Weston Town Meeting (the "Guide"), the current version of which is found at Attachment 5, and is available on the Moderator's webpage. Although the Guide is typically included with the Warrant, we note it was omitted for the November Town Meeting. The Guide provides summary information for voters about Town Meeting procedures and the role of the Moderator. As a result of our deliberations, it has approximately doubled in length and provides substantially more information. The current version incorporates our recommendations. The following discusses the various issues we addressed related to the Guide.

¹⁶ We also recommend that the Selectmen or other group in town provide a broader orientation to new residents that covers all parts of town government.

¹⁷ These materials are attached with materials on other town meetings at Attachment 3.

Length of Presentations. Many members had been concerned that the Moderator's previous speaking limit of three minutes discouraged residents from coming forward to speak. Others believed it allowed Town Meeting to proceed more efficiently, and were concerned that meetings drag on too long. Several members voiced concerns that formal presentations were too long, boring, and sometimes do not present sufficiently meaningful information to inform voters. A small minority of members believe there should be no formal presentations at all.

The Committee voted that initial pre-arranged presentations on Warrant Articles, pro and con, should be limited to 20 minutes in total, with each speaker limited to ten minutes. There was a consensus to increase other speaker time limits to five minutes. The Moderator implemented this change at the May Town Meeting. There was a consensus that time limits not vary by the specific Warrant Article under consideration. A majority voted not to recommend placing time limits in the bylaws.

We also recommend that a visible time clock be used, if possible through the video projection system so that all speakers and voters know, at any given point, how much time a presenter has taken and how much remains. Such a time clock is used in Maynard.

Pro and Con Mikes. Members raised several concerns about the Moderator's previous use of speaker microphones identified by those in favor of an Article and those opposed ("pro and con mikes"). The committee understands there were reasons for this system in that it allows the Moderator to quickly identify who is speaking in favor and who is opposed to a particular Article, and thereby allows her to provide balance to the debate. But the committee believes the negatives outweigh these reasons. In particular, concerns were expressed that this system was intimidating and segregated the speakers artificially without regard to whether the speaker was merely asking a question. We suggest there are alternatives for the Moderator to accomplish the same goals, for example if the Moderator believes the debate is too one-sided, she can ask the audience if there is someone who wishes to express an alternative point of view. But even this recommendation was controversial because some members believe that the Moderator's desire to balance the debate is misplaced and beyond the scope of her duties, while others expressed significant concern about the need to protect minority rights. There was no consensus on this issue. We recommended in the spring the elimination of pro and con mikes, and take note that the Moderator adopted this recommendation at the May Town Meeting.

We also encourage the Moderator to continue her efforts to get voters who are interested in speaking on issues to identify themselves in advance of the meeting. She now publicizes this in the Guide and in the Grapevine. This enables her to identify opposition to an Article, and possibly facilitate the organization of a formal presentation in opposition. In addition, this advance information will help inform her of the extent of debate and the amount of opposition speakers.

Other Microphone Issues. We recommended in the spring the placement of three microphones at the front of the auditorium and the use of mobile microphones, and take note that the Moderator adopted this recommendation at the May Town Meeting. The Moderator should revisit the placement of the podium so that speakers can better face the audience while also looking at their presentation materials on the screen behind them.

Presence of Young Children and Other Non-Voters. We recommend unanimously that parents who are voters take advantage of day care resources at Town Meeting or of their own, but if they bring their babies or young children into the auditorium, to be sensitive to the potential for disruption for others, as Town Meeting is an important proceeding for adults only. As discussed in subsection B above, efforts should be undertaken to try to publicize in advance the availability of child care options at Town Meeting.

We take note of the long-standing practice that non-voters are seated separately. The committee believes that the integrity of our votes make it essential that these procedures be fully used and enforced.

2. Other Town Meeting Issues.

Voting Slips and Other Voting Procedures. A slim majority (5-4) voted in favor of recommending, that as a matter of flexibility in running Town Meeting, the Moderator should use single colored cards, known as voting slips, instead of voice votes, and that if this voting procedure is viewed with favor, a bylaw change should be considered. We note that town counsel opined in an e-mail dated October 24, 2012 that, although it is a permissible reading of the Town Meeting bylaw (Article 1) that the Moderator has the existing authority, within limits, at any given Town Meeting to seek approval from voters on the use of voting slips, she stated: "To minimize controversy and potential challenges, therefore, I would not recommend using voting slips without a bylaw amendment as some might argue that such action is inconsistent with the Town's bylaws." A larger majority of the committee voted against recommending a bylaw change to permit secret ballots.

Roberts Rules Of Order. A narrow majority of members (5-4) voted not to recommend changes to the bylaw related to the use of Roberts Rules of Order. We note that that the use of Roberts Rules of Order is constrained by state law and current bylaw provisions that set forth specific procedural rules.

Part of this vote was to reject recommending the replacement of Roberts Rules of Order with a manual published by the Massachusetts Moderators Association entitled Town Meeting Time. The Association describes Roberts Rules of Order as intended for situations that "typically involve regular meetings held to deal with the ongoing affairs of a club, lodge, religious body, or other affinity group."¹⁸ The book goes on to emphasize that our Town Meetings serve a difference purpose, constrained by state law, and held pursuant to specific warrant articles. The book describes its purpose as follows: "This volume [Town Meeting Time] attempts to incorporate the applicable parts of Robert's (and other manuals) and establish a model rules of order which takes full cognizance of the peculiarities of a Massachusetts town meeting."¹⁹

Those voting in the minority make the following comments and recommendations. A substantial majority of nearby towns we considered as peers to Weston use Town Meeting Time,

¹⁸ Town Meeting Time §3.

¹⁹ Ibid.

including Bedford, Concord, Foxborough, and Sudbury.²⁰ Robert's Rules covers all types of meetings and therefore can be rather rigid in its requirements. Our Moderators have sometimes chosen, without objection by Town Meeting attendees, to relax the rules. Town Meeting Time is sensitive to the specific structure of Town Meetings and does not sacrifice the goals of fairness and basic parliamentary law. If the Moderator has the formal ability to be more flexible, and this approach results in a fair, yet less cumbersome meeting, it is difficult to see a down side. One example of this is the voter who shouts out from the floor: "Call the question!" The Moderator has been known to say, "I know one more person has asked to speak. Would you be willing to hold that request?" If Robert's Rules were to be strictly followed, the person "calling the question" should have come to the microphone and said "I move the previous question." And the Moderator would have been required to take the vote without comment. As a result, the minority recommends that the Selectmen's bylaw committee more fully evaluate the use of Town Meeting Time and recommend a bylaw change if they feel it is appropriate.

The committee also suggests that the existing summary of Roberts Rules of Order now found on the Town website²¹ should be updated, and other summaries be considered.²²

Cut-Off at Town Meeting of Consideration of new Issues. We recommend, as guidance to the Moderator, that as of 10:00 p.m. on each Town Meeting night there be a cut-off for new agenda items, and that the Moderator should use his or her discretion to poll Town Meeting whether to continue deliberations on a particular evening. This procedure is used in Concord.

Consent Agenda. There was also a consensus that the Selectman should review their existing authority to use a consent agenda at Town Meeting or consider seeking proper authority through a bylaw amendment. Any such use of a consent agenda should include a reminder to voters of the process to remove an item from the consent agenda. This approach for example is used successfully in Concord for matters that had been previously approved unanimously for three consecutive years.

Miscellaneous. The following is a discussion of other consensus suggestions to improve the functioning of Town Meeting:

- The Moderator should remind voters that as a courtesy to our fellow Westonians to please try to be concise and avoid repeating points that have already been made.
- Town officials should be encouraged to sit on stage with identifiable name cards, with town counsel sitting in a visible position as well. This is done in Maynard.
- The order of the Warrant is important to make sure that the most important matters (e.g., the budget) and/or visible or controversial issues (e.g., citizen petitions) be considered first, and we note with approval the ordering of the Warrant at May Town Meeting.

²⁰ See listing in Attachment 2.

²¹ http://www.weston.govoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={AA1209C5-6A84-479E-A4A3-7663301B8058}.

²² We note that many town meetings in Vermont use the following four page summary of Robert's Rules of order: <http://crs.uvm.edu/citizens/meeting.pdf>.

- The lighting in the auditorium can play an important factor in the success of Town Meeting. We note that the lighting at this past May Town Meeting significantly improved on the second day, but that low lighting was still a problem at the November Special Town Meeting.
- Despite various problems with sound and lighting, the current location of Town Meeting in the auditorium is preferable to the gymnasium.
- When we need to use the gym for overflow crowds, the video feed needs substantial improvement.
- Information tables in the outer hall should be more widely used and the availability of this space should be more widely publicized.

E. Finally, Can The Office Of The Moderator Be Modified To Encourage Candidates To
Run And To Prepare New Moderators For Their Role?

One potential change we considered in this area, but rejected, is the idea of adding a new elected office of Assistant Moderator. Therefore, we have no recommendations on this question.

* * * * *

In closing, we applaud you for your vision in creating this committee, working with us these past few months, and implementing many of our recommendations at the May Town Meeting without waiting for this Report. We respectfully request you publicize this Report and distribute it to all significant town offices, boards and committees, and ask them to review it and consider the suggestions relevant to their respective jurisdictions.

Respectfully submitted

/signed/

Thomas S. Crane (Chairman)
 Alex Shimada-Brand (Vice-Chairman)
 Beverly S. Foster (Secretary)
 Doug Alcaide
 Nancy Benotti
 John A. Fiske
 Isabella Jancourtz
 Richard Sher
 Patricia Shotwell
 Patricia S. Siek
 Jean Thurston
 Edmund Ward
 Virginia Ward

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS*

Finance Committee, John McDonald
League of Women Voters, David Hutcheson
School Board, vacant
Selectmen, Doug Gillespie

*Wendy Spector, Moderator served as an Ex Officio, non-voting member of the committee

ATTACHMENT 1

Weston Town Meeting Advisory Committee
12-12-12 Minority Report of Isabella Jancourtz, Member

The wise old New England adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" is particularly good advice for the way we govern ourselves at town meeting, an old New England institution which has worked very well in this town for three centuries.

However, when a long line of Weston moderators with a healthy respect for the rules and for the voters was succeeded by our present moderator in 2010, years of tried and true tradition went right out the window. Like an interior decorator determined to leave her mark, brand new moderator Wendy Spector immediately set about "fixing" town meeting.

For whatever reason and without any voter input, Ms. Spector decided that she did not need to follow *Robert's Rules of Order* even though our by-laws require it.

ARTICLE I TOWN MEETING

Section 11 *The procedure in town meetings when not otherwise prescribed shall be governed by the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order so far as applicable.*

Nevertheless, Ms. Spector simply drew up her own rules and, without any prior notice to all the voters in the town in the form of a warrant article asking the voters to approve the new rules, explaining the reason or need for them and advising the electorate that a 2/3 vote at town meeting would be required to effect this rules change, she merely presented her new rules to the voters for approval at the beginning of her first town meeting in November, 2010.

Not surprisingly, the voters followed her cue and approved her request. As a result, voters now had to line up at "pro" and "con" microphones and were limited to 3 minutes' worth of free speech, with Ms. Spector ready to shut them down in mid-thought, by blasting them back to their seats with loud music, another of her innovations. Following a bit of voter uproar, she substituted a bell, which some voters, including me, also found objectionable. (We had been accustomed to the respectful voice of the moderator asking a long-winded voter to please conclude his or her remarks. This, however, was rarely necessary. Former moderator Bob Buchanan was famous for advising voters and presenters "Brevity is your friend.")

In the view of many in attendance, our traditional town meeting was thus transformed from a spirited, free and open democratic gathering to a near Orwellian experience presided over by a moderator who actually threatened to "get the constable" in response to a groan from the voters over yet another endless presentation. Only the speech of the voters was cut short by this new moderator, not that of the presenters, generally members of town boards or their paid experts.

I and many other voters resisted both the new rules and the arbitrary way they were imposed on us. There were many letters to the editor of the Town Crier, statements and motions on the floor of town meeting and two campaigns contesting the moderator's re-election, all of which were unsuccessful in reversing the damage done to our rights as voters.

When late in 2011, the moderator announced that she was forming a Town Meeting Advisory Committee and called for volunteers, I wrote to her right away, stating that I was most interested in joining and that my goal was to stand up for town meetings governed by our by-laws and by *Robert's Rules*.

To her credit, moderator Spector made no apparent attempt to control the composition of this group and welcomed all registered voters with an interest in joining. Diverse as we are in our views, we have worked together for the most part constructively, albeit slowly, to come up with several helpful suggestions for the moderator, all of which are contained in the Weston Town Meeting Advisory Committee (WTMAC) majority report, submitted by our chairman Tom Crane.

Moderator Wendy Spector's regular attendance at and contributions to WTMAC discussions are also to

be commended.

The end result of our year-long deliberations has been that we have recommended to the moderator that the pro and con mikes be eliminated and that each voter have 5 minutes to speak which could be followed by another 5 minutes after all others who wish to speak have done so, while each organized presentation of and opposition to an article have a total of 20 minutes, with no one speaker having more than 10 minutes at the mike. Loud music and bells are also history.

In addition, the moderator's Town Meeting Advisory Committee has recommended that our by-laws and *Robert's Rules* be followed at town meeting. The moderator is now conducting town meeting in accordance with WTMAC recommendations. There have been no further complaints.

So, after three years, we are essentially back to where we started, except that while *Robert's Rules* give voters 10 minutes to speak on each article at town meeting, WTMAC has suggested 5 minutes per voter.

One change in voting procedure that we did suggest to the moderator, in order to insure the integrity of the vote, was to introduce the use of voting cards along with the voice vote at town meeting. This was tried for the first time at the November, 2012 meeting and the feed-back from members who attended has been good. If this is to become a regular feature of future town meetings, it will require a by-law change.

We have also recommended that there be a survey of the voters to determine, among other things, whether a different month of the year, day of the week or time of day would increase voter participation. My own strong feeling is that more people would come to a meeting when the sun is out, on a weekend morning or afternoon, as opposed to our weekday evening meetings in the dark of night, at the dimly lit high school. This too would require a by-law change.

Another area where we have discussed letting the sun shine in is the budget process, which has been taking place with very little publicity or coverage, including almost no coverage by the Weston Media Center. My fellow WTMAC member Bill Sandalls is submitting his own minority report, which I second, and has reviewed the deficiencies in our current budget process in great detail.

I would emphasize that the voters are presently kept in the dark about the budget discussions by the School Committee, the Permanent Building Committee, the Community Preservation Committee, the Finance Committee and other town boards because these meetings are not televised and broadcast by the Weston Media Center. This also applies to the Budget Summit in November and the Budget Hearing in April.

Although meetings of the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board are presently recorded and broadcast by the WMC, there are no free copies available for the public at the library or elsewhere, although WMC does sell DVDs of broadcasts.

WTMAC member Doug Alcaide has said that for "tens of thousands of dollars" Weston could have what Wayland has, a town website where the public can view recordings of town meetings and meetings of various boards in the town on demand.

It strikes me as supremely ironic that we have recently voted to spend about \$500,000 to preserve our ancient town records located in the basement of Town Hall and to make them available to the public, but we are spending nothing on preserving or making available to the public the record of our present day government.

In my view, the work of the Weston Town Meeting Advisory Committee should not end with our report to the moderator, who has indicated that she will not run again. We could provide valuable assistance to the next new moderator, who may also be faced with a challenging learning curve, and to our fellow voters, by continuing to work toward a more welcoming, well-attended and user-friendly town meeting.

In addition, I suggest that WTMAC be given the necessary assistance to present our own suggestions to

our fellow voters for their consideration, including funding for a town-wide voter survey and town counsel's assistance in reviewing town meeting articles generated by the voter survey, especially those which may require amendments to the by-laws.

I regard it as a clear threat to the integrity of town meeting that our current selectmen have voted unanimously to form their own Town Meeting Advisory Committee, to review and propose changes to Article I of the By-Laws of the Town of Weston, the article which governs town meeting.

Unlike the moderator's WTMAC, a majority of whom are regular voters with no official position, the opposite will be true for the selectmen's WTMAC, which will be largely selected by the selectmen or by members of other town bodies, some of whom were already previously selected by the selectmen. Even the 4 regular or "at large" voters are to be selected by these same 3 selectmen. So much for checks and balances.

As Bill Sandalls said to selectmen Mike Harrity, Doug Gillespie and Ed Coburn on November 14, just before they voted unanimously to form their own WTMAC, they need to bear in mind that they are the executive branch of our town government and that we the voters are the legislative branch.

Our responsibilities as voters and their responsibilities as our selectmen are entirely different, even though, as voters themselves, they have the right to vote on articles presented at town meeting, which they will then in their official capacities be required to implement, to abide by and/or to enforce. But it is the voters who rule in Weston, not the selectmen.

Rather than attempt to reconfigure town meeting or otherwise usurp the rights of the voters, the selectmen should be focused on doing their own jobs, which are defined in our by-laws as follows:

ARTICLE II POWERS AND DUTIES OF TOWN OFFICERS

Section 1. *The selectmen shall have general direction and management of the property and affairs of the town in all matters not otherwise provided by the law of the Commonwealth or by these by-laws.*

The sorry state of some of our public buildings is evidence enough that the selectmen have not been paying sufficient attention to the management of our town property. Our soaring town debt and tax rate are proof plenty of their mismanagement of the financial affairs of the town and their lack of fiscal restraint.

They have neglected to fill vacancies on various town boards, such as the Affordable Housing Trust which has had two vacancies for about a year. They have failed to provide adequate opportunities for voters to be heard and to get answers to their questions in advance of town meeting on important matters now before us such as the Urbanica proposal for the Josiah Smith Tavern and Old Library.

Instead of fulfilling their proper executive functions, the selectmen have been taking over the voters' job of legislating, everything from a name change for themselves (to Select Board) to a "Pay As You Throw" plan for the town dump, which they wisely reversed in response to voter outrage prior to the November, 2011 town meeting, at which Henry Viles then withdrew the article based on the citizens' petition he wrote requiring the Board of Selectmen to dump PAYT.

Most recently the selectmen have decreed that there would be bow hunting of deer in our town forests. This too should have been presented to the voters at town meeting and it will hopefully be reversed by the voters at the May, 2013 meeting via another citizens' petition. But it would have been a far less divisive issue if it had been decided originally by all the voters, not by the three voters we elected to manage our town, as our Board of Selectmen.

It is all well and good for the selectmen to entertain ideas about how we could do things better in Weston, but their job is to frame any such idea as a warrant article that voters can either approve or disapprove at town meeting, not to interfere with our right to govern ourselves at the local level as Weston voters have done for three hundred years.

Do we really need to have another long battle over rules just to keep the selectmen from interfering with our rights as voters at town meeting? And exactly how did the first battle over the rules really get started?

Was it perhaps a member of the then Board of Selectmen who asked for the current moderator's drastic, unilateral rules changes following her election in 2010? Could it possibly have had something to do with the voters' raucous rejection of the Josiah Smith Tavern and Old Library proposal (strongly endorsed and promoted by the selectmen and numerous other town boards) at the November, 2009 town meeting?

Whether or not one or more members of our Board of Selectmen instigated the moderator's "fix" of town meeting, they all clearly supported it. Have they learned nothing from that debacle?

I would respectfully suggest that we in Weston have enough real problems to deal with that we should not be distracted by another battle of the rules and/or a battle of the WTMACs. It would be far better for our selectmen to respect the rules we do have, while they tend to the duties for which they volunteered.

Isabella Jancourtz

A Minority Report on the Moderator's Town Meeting Advisory Committee

TO WESTON'S TOWN MEETING MEMBERS:

The Town Meeting Advisory Committee's report to the Moderator (the "majority report") is a well written document, replete with literary conceits and references to Tocqueville. Sadly, major portions of the report are a work of fiction, conflating various inconclusive discussions during the committee's numerous meetings over ten months into illusions of consensus and seemingly well thought-out recommendations. We wish that this fiction was a sturdy reality, but that is not the case.

To begin as the majority report does with the Moderator's charge to the committee, we note that those instructions, as well as the formation of the committee itself, were never validated by a vote of Town Meeting. This should have been done just as a matter of good governance regardless of the Moderator's obvious authority to form an advisory committee. Subsequently a motion to submit to a Town Meeting vote a statement of the committee's purpose and objectives, which included all elements of the Moderator's instructions, failed to gain a majority vote of the committee on the grounds that the statement was premature and too restrictive.

Why should Town Meeting support be important? If nothing else, the Moderator's role should be one of strict adherence to proper procedures. In this way, the Moderator would be able to preside impartially at Town Meetings, particularly if one of this committee's recommendations became a Town Meeting warrant article. Since the Moderator had expressed a preference for the Massachusetts Moderators Association's handbook of parliamentary law, Town Meeting Time, we are puzzled by this lack of a Town Meeting vote that is contrary to that manual's principles.

In contrast to the Moderator's constrained role, voters attending a Town Meeting have a clear right to set the goals and objectives of any and all Town boards and committees within the parameters of state law and the Town's bylaws. What could be more appropriate than a Town Meeting approval of an advisory committee considering the procedures of the Town Meeting itself? Ultimately Town Meeting voters have a clear right to act or not act on any committee's conclusions and recommendations.

The failure to obtain Town Meeting guidance weakened the committee's focus. Notwithstanding that loss of focus, there was not a lack of effort. Committee attendance has remained at a high level nearly to the end. Meeting discussions have usually been lively. However, it was also soon obvious that there was no shared sense among the committee's self-selected members about what the committee's purpose and goals should be.

Some members felt the committee should emphasize support for the Moderator's personal conduct of Town Meetings. Others suggested that offering more efficient Town Meeting procedures, such as speaker time limits, voter placards and more congenial voter accommodations, such as baby sitting, might attract broader attendance, even at the sacrifice of more informative but time consuming discussions of warrant articles. Still others proposed a wide range of radical departures from traditional formats—such as Saturday picnics for debates and discussions, a total ban on prepared presentations at Town Meetings, and on-line "attendance" with residents voting on warrant articles from the comfort of their own living rooms.

The ongoing chaos of the committee's meetings led to a sense of frustration among a growing number of members. The committee's dysfunctional proceedings were then exacerbated by the arbitrary expulsion of a member without adequate explanation or discussion. The majority report also neglects to mention that there were two separate motions to dissolve the committee that narrowly missed being adopted.

The committee's attention should have been focused on a meaningful and coherent agenda centered on the core issues that Town Meetings traditionally deliberate and vote. These are quite simply property taxation and property rights. Practically all other significant Town Meeting matters emanate from these two core issues—such as how tax revenues are spent on what Town services, what the Town borrows that tax payers are ultimately called on to repay, and what restrictions the Town's zoning bylaws impose on property owners.

With this focus, the committee could have examined the information that should be provided to Weston tax payers and property owners so that Town Meeting votes are made on an as fully informed basis as possible. Yet, in spite of requests to do so, the committee never looked at a Town Meeting warrant, article by article, to determine what information would have been of interest to voters that could have been provided but was not.

We need only recall that the most important business of last spring's Annual Town Meeting, the annual budget, was approved unanimously in fifteen minutes with no voter questions or discussion, and then wonder why that would be the case in this Town which has the highest average tax bill of any town in Massachusetts. Surely there must have been some item worth a question if only voters knew what to ask.

Here are some of the on-going matters that have a significant effect on the property taxes that Weston residents pay but for which insufficient information and analysis has been presented in conjunction with the Town's annual budget:

- **Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA).** Over 70% of the Town's budget is for personnel expenses subject to CBAs, of which all but one are still under negotiation for Fiscal Year 2014. Statistics, such as those at Boston.com, show Weston at or near the top of such measures as personnel expenses per employee. But our Town administration has been customarily opaque about CBA terms after negotiations conclude, even with the Town's own Finance Committee. More detailed descriptions of contracts that have been agreed to, along with comparisons with neighboring towns, should be disclosed. After all, unions publish such information for their own members. As it is now, Town Meeting voters are being asked to approve budgets where the predominant expense is largely a "black box."
- **Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB).** The OPEB unfunded liability, principally for health care benefits of Town government retirees, looms large over Weston's long-term fiscal outlook. Beyond the daunting amounts to pay down the liability, what specifically are these benefits and how do they compare with other towns as well as with competitive private sector practices?
- **State Aid.** Here Weston ranks low. State funds compensate only partially for Weston Public Schools' extensive participation in the METCO program. Spending per pupil in Weston Public Schools is 40% higher than the state-wide average, so all Weston tax payers then have to make up a huge funding gap. At issue is not Weston's exemplary commitment to METCO but how Weston's share of state aid lags behind state-wide averages and what corrective actions Town and school officials should be taking.

- **Minuteman Regional High School.** No more than three Weston students attended Minuteman Regional High School in any recent year, while Weston has had to pay over \$80,000 annually for five tuitions. As Minuteman launches a major construction project, its cost may be allocated to “member” towns based on their respective property valuations. This means an out-sized hit to Weston of as much as \$3.5 million, under the terms of a 42-year-old perpetual contract. What are the selectmen doing to renegotiate this contract so that Town’s costs are in proportion to the usage of Minuteman by Weston residents as is the case for “non-member” towns?
- **Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds.** From 2001 through last fiscal year-end, an annual 3% surcharge on property tax bills swept nearly \$13.3 million into the Community Preservation Fund. And the state added \$9.1 million in a partial match over the same period. At last fiscal year-end, there was an unallocated balance of over \$8 million, or over 35%, of the Fund’s receipts since inception, for which the Community Preservation Committee harbors some spending intentions yet to be finally approved by Town Meeting votes, if ever. Meanwhile the Town’s 2011 Annual Report boasted that \$2.4 million in investment income was “earned” on the Fund’s idle balances in the Town’s treasury. Since 3% is the maximum surcharge under state law, shouldn’t Town Meeting voters consider a tax cut by reducing this surcharge to the statutory minimum of 1% while this huge balance remains unallocated?
- **School buses.** The School Department operates an expensive fleet of Town-owned school buses, with maintenance now the job of the Department of Public Works. Out-sourcing school transportation to cut costs was considered once years ago and rejected. Shouldn’t out-sourcing through a competitive bidding process get another look? Now with more students interested in walking to school as part of a “green” environment as evidenced by parental demands for police details at street crossings, the flexibility of contracted transportation could net further savings through fewer bus runs.
- **The lack of cost reduction programs.** Town annual reports show no more than an occasional bland statement about careful spending by Town departments. As private sector budget officers know, costs are hard to reduce without specific goals and hard targets. A public discussion about an across-the-board 10% cost reduction program might spotlight wasteful spending and no-longer needed services.
- **The inherent “wealth transfer” effect of property taxes.** Public education is an integral part of America’s social contract which voters support mostly through their local governments. However, there are inequitable but unavoidable consequences from the funding of public education through property taxes—for instance, the skimming by families living in a particular town long enough to put children through a superior school system and then moving on. And, in Weston with its high average of seniors remaining alone in homes that have current valuations and tax bills well above historic norms, there is a perverse “wealth transfer” from seniors to younger and quite possibly more affluent and mobile families. Weston’s diverse demographic make-up calls for some amelioration so that taxes based on illiquid valuations do not compel senior home owners to plead poverty or leave town themselves.
- **The Town’s escalating debt.** In times past, fiscal conservatism which was admittedly biased against debt financing kept some worthy proposals “on the shelf.” Today, the opposite prevails as the lure of easy money and low interest rates touted by professional advisors and financiers makes one overbuilt project after another seem irresistible to Town and school officials. The Town’s debt is forecasted to peak in the near future at \$92 million, or an average of over \$25,000 per Weston household. Now there is a proposal to spend over \$4 million of public funds to convert Town-owned property into privately

owned ventures in retail businesses with historically high failure rates. While some transient residents may view this with equanimity, others may fear that excessive borrowing and spending will come to an unhappy end when higher interest rates in financial markets and higher inflation in the national economy inevitably return. The long-term aspects of the Town's debt beg public discussion and debate, especially before Town Meeting voters are next asked to authorize new notes and bonds.

The majority report does give a superficial nod to the need to improve the quality and accessibility of information for Town Meeting members. Of course, it would not have been possible for the majority report to comment more comprehensively since this committee did not look at any Town Meeting warrant seriously to consider how matters like the issues listed above would be presented to voters for discussion and debate.

This committee could have continued in more worthwhile service by taking an ongoing role of analyzing the relevance and completeness of information provided before and at each Town Meeting and then publishing shortly thereafter its recommendations where improvements could be made in the future. The committee had several discussions to that end and the concept of this proposal was recorded in the minutes under a vote of the whole committee.

But otherwise this proposal was left undone. We believe the incumbent Moderator or her successor should seek a Town Meeting vote authorizing a permanent advisory committee to do this work. It would then be up to the voters and tax payers to insist that the improvements this permanent committee recommends be adopted.

The Board of Selectmen at its meeting on November 14 voted unanimously to start up its own Town Meeting advisory committee to address more or less the same topics. Notably, however, the scope of the selectmen's vote included no explicit acknowledgement of the need to provide Town Meeting voters with better information about warrant articles.

It is regrettable that this committee's majority report endorses the selectmen's action. The principal reason that action is unwise is the potential threat this selectmen's committee poses for the independence of Town Meetings that is an essential element of democratic town government. This is evident from the way the selectmen's new committee is structured.

First of all, the selectmen's new committee will not be representative of Town Meeting voters. Eight of the new committee's twelve members, a two-thirds majority, will each be designated by one or another town board or committee, or nominated by one or another civic organization. These are the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Community Preservation Committee, Council-on-Aging, Parent-Teachers Organization, and League of Women Voters.

These groups have been described by a selectman as the Town's stakeholders. This is nonsense. The Town's stakeholders are its voters and tax payers. The remaining four seats on the selectmen's committee, a minority from the start, will go to registered voters of the Town, and will be appointed by the selectmen. It should be noted that these minority members will be the only ones specifically required to be registered voters.

Whose interests will the selectmen's new committee look out for? Each of the Town boards or committees listed above that has spending authority, will have a strong interest in getting its own warrant articles approved

at Town Meeting. That is especially so for the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee. Those interests could be incompatible with Town Meeting objectives of fuller disclosure by Town officials, fair discussion and debate of warrant articles and more informed voting.

This is not to say that a person who is serving on another board or committee should be automatically ineligible to sit on an advisory committee considering how Town Meetings function. But who appoints that person is a distinction with an important difference. That is why the only appropriate elected official who should form this committee and appoint its members upon an authorizing Town Meeting vote is the Moderator, who has no spending authority or, for that matter, any authority outside of the Town Meeting itself except to make appointments to certain advisory committees. If there is to be a do-over of a Town Meeting advisory committee, it should be the Moderator who takes on that task as the only elected Town official with statutory responsibility for the functioning of Town Meeting.

The incumbent Moderator has announced that she will not run for another term. The season to elect a new Moderator next May will be upon Weston's voters soon enough. That will be an excellent opportunity to hear candidates discuss and debate every aspect of how Town Meetings function, including all the provisions of Article 1 of the Town's general by-laws. Then the voters, and not some insider cabal, can decide what should be done. That process, which will be far more open and inclusive than the selectmen's new committee, should be allowed to unfold.

This is an important issue. For all its shortcomings, the institution of our Town Meeting must be safeguarded from intrusions by the Board of Selectmen. The principal objectives of any review of the bylaws governing Town Meetings should be clearly delineated for an independent committee that would report directly to Town Meeting. No, it is not efficiency. No, it is not seeing how to minimize the time required for Town Meetings. Yes, it is more engaged debate and discussion of their Town government by tax payers, property owners and residents. Yes, it is better informed voting at Town Meetings.

Vigorous independence of Town Meetings must be maintained to sustain the checks and balances on executive authority that democratic governments require. That independence needs to be protected now for whatever the future may bring.

Respectfully submitted,
William T. Sandalls, Jr.
Henry L. Viles

December 6, 2012

ATTACHMENT 2

Weston, MA Registered Voters, Town Meeting Attendance & Quorum, 1996-2011

<u>Date</u>	<u>Registered Voters</u>	<u>Town Meeting Attendance</u>	<u>Quorum</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Attendance As A Percent of Registered Voters</u>	<u>Quorum As A Percent of Registered Voters</u>
2/05/1996	7,173	784	40	2/05/1996	10.9%	0.56%
5/13/1996	7,314	491	40	5/13/1996	6.7%	0.55%
12/09/1996	7,455	548	40	12/09/1996	7.4%	0.54%
5/12/1997	7,292	873	40	5/12/1997	12.0%	0.55%
5/14/1997	7,292	788	40	5/14/1997	10.8%	0.55%
5/19/1997	7,292	281	40	5/19/1997	3.9%	0.55%
5/21/1997	7,292	381	40	5/21/1997	5.2%	0.55%
10/20/1997	7,128	635	40	10/20/1997	8.9%	0.56%
12/08/1997	7,128	1,161	40	12/08/1997	16.3%	0.56%
12/09/1997	7,128	194	40	12/09/1997	2.7%	0.56%
5/11/1998	7,159	533	40	5/11/1998	7.4%	0.56%
5/13/1998	7,159	321	40	5/13/1998	4.5%	0.56%
1/06/1999	7,190	408	40	1/06/1999	5.7%	0.56%
5/10/1999	7,254	164	40	5/10/1999	2.3%	0.55%
12/06/1999	7,317	535	40	12/06/1999	7.3%	0.55%
5/08/2000	7,240	345	40	5/08/2000	4.8%	0.55%
11/13/2000	7,162	344	40	11/13/2000	4.8%	0.56%
11/14/2000	7,162	210	40	11/14/2000	2.9%	0.56%
3/12/2001	7,162	377	40	3/12/2001	5.3%	0.56%
5/07/2001	7,430	285	40	5/07/2001	3.8%	0.54%
6/18/2001	7,430	263	40	6/18/2001	3.5%	0.54%
5/13/2002	7,318	372	40	5/13/2002	5.1%	0.55%
5/15/2002	7,318	132	40	5/15/2002	1.8%	0.55%
11/25/2002	6,939	225	40	11/25/2002	3.2%	0.58%
5/12/2003	7,125	227	40	5/12/2003	3.2%	0.56%
5/10/2004	7,237	279	40	5/10/2004	3.9%	0.55%
5/12/2004	7,237	175	40	5/12/2004	2.4%	0.55%
11/29/2004	7,162	105	40	11/29/2004	1.5%	0.56%
5/09/2005	7,070	666	40	5/09/2005	9.4%	0.57%
5/11/2005	7,070	306	40	5/11/2005	4.3%	0.57%
5/16/2005	7,070	265	40	5/16/2005	3.7%	0.57%
11/28/2005	6,978	51	40	11/28/2005	0.7%	0.57%
5/08/2006	6,767	279	40	5/08/2006	4.1%	0.59%
11/08/2006	6,555	790	40	11/08/2006	12.1%	0.61%
5/07/2007	6,928	193	40	5/07/2007	2.8%	0.58%
11/28/2007	7,301	176	40	11/28/2007	2.4%	0.55%
5/12/2008	7,522	402	40	5/12/2008	5.3%	0.53%
5/14/2008	7,522	468	40	5/14/2008	6.2%	0.53%
12/01/2008	7,742	83	40	12/01/2008	1.1%	0.52%
5/11/2009	7,741	292	40	5/11/2009	3.8%	0.52%
5/13/2009	7,741	230	40	5/13/2009	3.0%	0.52%
5/18/2009	7,741	196	40	5/18/2009	2.5%	0.52%
11/30/2009	7,740	1,087	40	11/30/2009	14.0%	0.52%
5/10/2010	7,800	194	40	5/10/2010	2.5%	0.51%
5/12/2010	7,800	178	40	5/12/2010	2.3%	0.51%
11/29/2010	7,860	125	40	11/29/2010	1.6%	0.51%
5/09/2011	7,782	211	40	5/09/2011	2.7%	0.51%
5/11/2011	7,782	115	40	5/11/2011	1.5%	0.51%
11/14/2011	7,704	564	40	11/14/2011	7.3%	0.52%
5/7/2012	7,476	328	40	5/7/2012	4.4%	0.54%
5/9/2012	7,476	251	40	5/9/2012	3.4%	0.54%
11/26/2012	8,187	141	80	11/26/2012	1.7%	0.98%
49 Session Average	7,318	374	40	49 Session Average	5.1%	0.55%

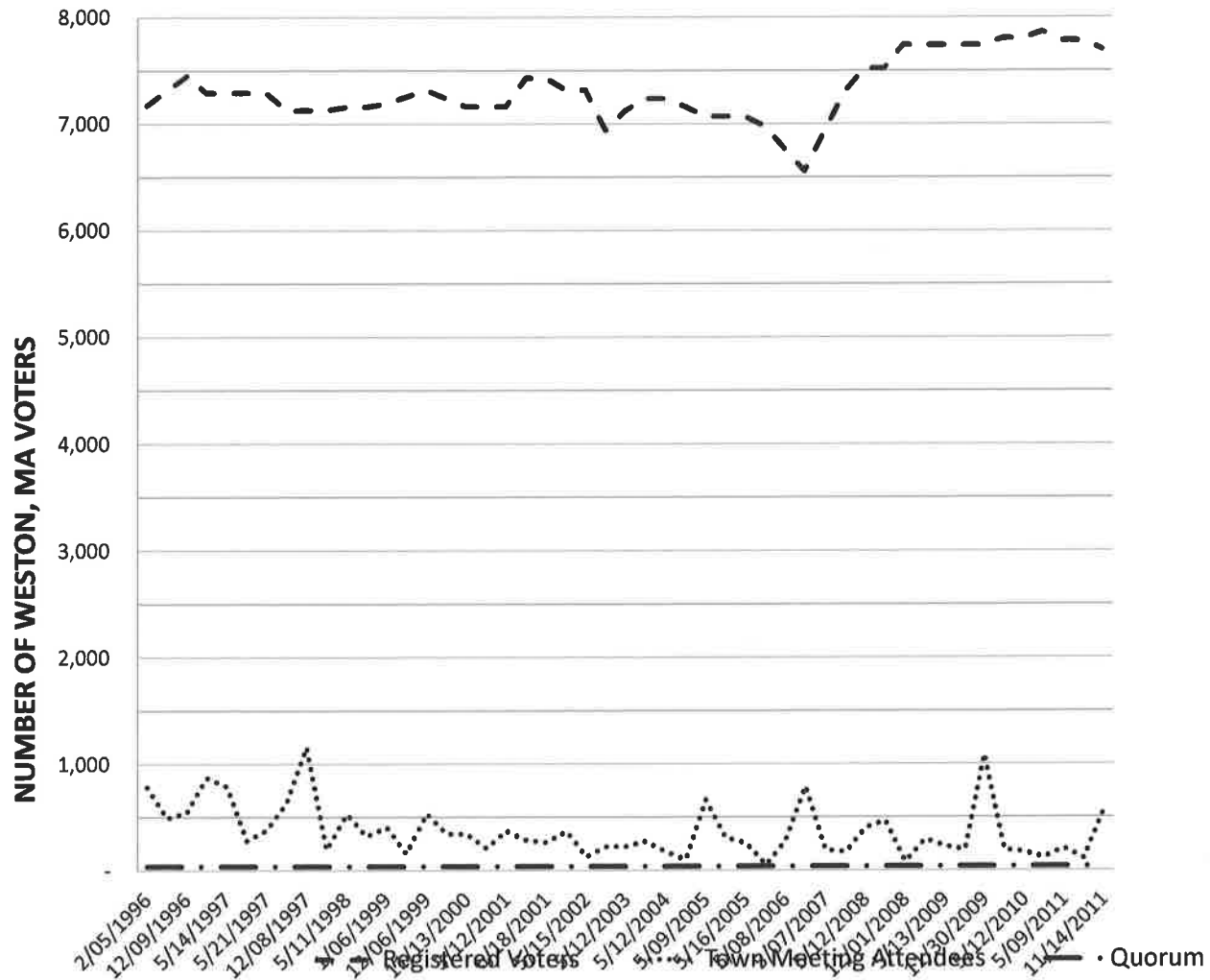
Sources:

Registered Voters: Figures for yearend 1995 through 2009 are from the 2003 and 2010 Weston Annual Report Statistics pages, available on the Town website. The yearend 2010 figure is from the town website and that for 2011 from Debbie Davenport. For sessions early in the year, I used the prior yearend registered voters figure. For May and June sessions, I averaged the prior and current yearend voters figures. For sessions late in the year, I used the current yearend voters figures.

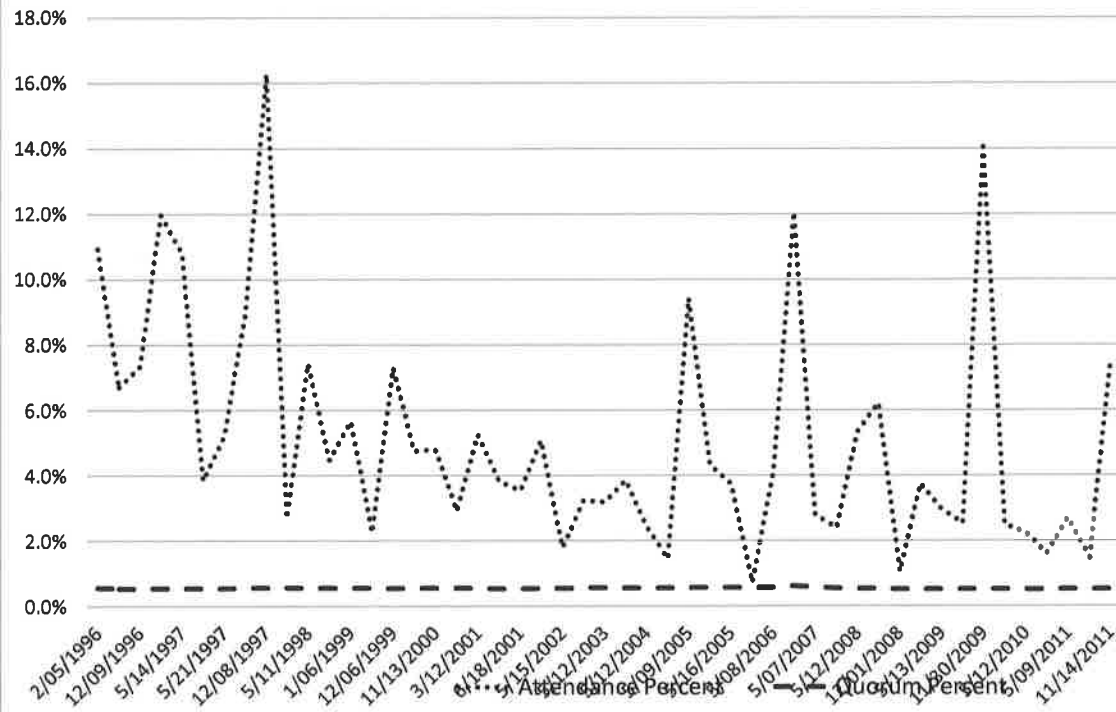
Town Meeting Attendance: Figures for 1996 through 2009 are from the Town website. Figures for 2010 & 2011 were provided by Debbie Davenport, Weston Town Clerk.

Quorum: Weston, MA Bylaws, Article I, Section 6, which has been unchanged since 1925 per Debbie Davenport, Weston Town Clerk.

Weston, MA Registered Voters, Town Meeting Attendance & Quorum, 1996-2011



Weston, MA Town Meeting Attendance & Quorum as a Percent of Registered Voters, 1996-2011



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Weston, MA Registered Voters, Town Meeting Attendance & Quorum, 1996-2011														
2															
3															
4		Registered		Town Meeting				Attendance		Quorum					
5	Date	Voters		Attendance		Quorum		As A Percent of		As A Percent of					
6								Registered Voters		Registered Voters				Comments For Attendance Over 500 Voters	
7	12/31/1995	7,173				40				0.56%					
8	2/05/1996			784				10.9%						High School Renovation	
9	5/13/1996			491				6.7%							
10	12/09/1996			548				7.4%						Middle School Architects's Fees	
11	12/31/1996	7,455				40				0.54%					
12	5/12/97			873				12.0%						Middle School Renovation	
13	5/14/1997			788				10.8%						Mass. Water Resources Authority	
14	5/19/1997			281				3.9%							
15	5/21/1997			381				5.2%							
16	10/20/1997			635				8.9%						Glenfeld East Renovation	
17	12/08/1997			1,161				16.3%						Rail Trail	
18	12/09/1997			194				2.7%							
19	12/31/1997	7,128				40				0.56%					
20	5/11/1998			533				7.4%						Middle Schhol & Town Hall Renov. & COA	
21	5/13/1998			321				4.5%							
22	12/31/1998	7,190				40				0.56%					
23	1/06/1999			408				5.7%							
24	5/10/1999			164				2.3%							
25	12/06/1999			535				7.3%						Town Hall & Elementary School Renovation	
26	12/31/1999	7,317				40				0.55%					
27	5/08/2000			345				4.8%							
28	11/13/2000			344				4.8%							
29	11/14/2000			210				2.9%							
30	12/31/2000	7,162				40				0.56%					
31	3/12/2001			377				5.3%							
32	5/07/2001			285				3.8%							
33	6/18/2001			263				3.5%							
34	12/31/2001	7,697				40				0.52%					
35	5/13/2002			372				5.1%							
36	5/15/2002			132				1.8%							
37	11/25/2002			225				3.2%							
38	12/31/2002	6,939				40				0.58%					
39	5/12/2003			227				3.2%							
40	12/31/2003	7,311				40				0.55%					
41	5/10/2004			279				3.9%							
42	5/12/2004			175				2.4%							
43	11/29/2004			105				1.5%							
44	12/31/2004	7,162				40				0.56%					
45	5/09/2005			666				9.4%						Highland Meadows	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
46	5/11/2005			306				4.3%							
47	5/16/2005			265				3.7%							
48	11/28/2005			51				0.7%							
49	12/31/2005	6,978				40				0.57%					
50	5/08/2006			279				4.1%							
51	11/08/2006			790				12.1%					Case Estates Purchase Proposal		
52	12/31/2006	6,555				40				0.61%					
53	5/07/2007			193				2.8%							
54	11/28/2007			176				2.4%							
55	12/31/2007	7,301				40				0.55%					
56	5/12/2008			402				5.3%							
57	5/14/2008			468				6.2%							
58	12/01/2008			83				1.1%							
59	12/31/2008	7,742				40				0.52%					
60	5/11/2009			292				3.8%							
61	5/13/2009			230				3.0%							
62	5/18/2009			196				2.5%							
63	11/30/2009			1,087				14.0%					Old Library/Josiah Smith Tavern Proposal		
64	12/31/2009	7,740				40				0.52%					
65	5/10/2010			194				2.5%							
66	5/12/2010			178				2.3%							
67	11/29/2010			125				1.6%							
68	12/31/2010	7,860				40				0.51%					
69	5/09/2011			211				2.7%							
70	5/11/2011			115				1.5%							
71	11/14/2011			564				7.3%					Field School Replacement Proposal		
72	12/31/2011	7,704				40				0.52%					
73															
74	Average	7,318		374		40		5.1%		0.55%					
75															
76	Annual Town Meeting Sessions			29	Town Meeting Sessions With Attendance Ratios:				Sessions By Ranges:						
77	Special Town Meeting Sessions			20		0.0% to 2.0%		6		0 to 100 Voters		2			
78						2.1% to 3.0%		11		101 to 200 Voters		12			
79	Total			49		3.1% to 4.0%		8		201 to 300 Voters		12			
80						4.1% to 5.0%		5		301 to 400 Voters		7			
81	Average Sessions Per Year			3.1		5.1% to 7.0%		7		401 to 500 Voters		4			
82						Over 7.1%		12		501 to 1,161 Voters		12			
83	Average Attendance First Annual Session			363		Total		49		Total		49			

Weston, MA Peer Towns In Middlesex & Norfolk Counties With Populations Between 5,000 & 20,000, Open Town Meetings & Within 40 Minutes Of Weston's Town Hall
Sorted By Distance In Minutes From Weston
(3/11/2012)

<u>Town</u>	2010 Population Per US Census: 5,000 to 20,000	Annual Town Meeting	Town Hall Address (TM Location Listed Below)	Distance From Weston Center:		Quorum	Speaker Time Limits	Procedural Rules	Town Website
				Miles	Minutes				
Weston	11,261	May 7 7:30 pm	Town Clerk's Office, P. O. Box 378, 11 Town House Road, Weston, MA 02493	0	0	40	No Limit for Main Pros, 3 minutes per Op 10 minutes Pro, 10 Op, 3 Other	Robert's Rules Electronic Voting	www.weston.org
Wayland	12,994	April 9 7:30 pm	Town Clerk, 41 Cochituate Road, Wayland, MA 01778	4	8	100			www.wayland.ma.us
Lincoln	6,362	March 24 9:30 am	Town Office Building, 16 Lincoln Road, Lincoln, MA 01773	5	12	100		Saturday Town Meeting	www.lincolntown.org
Sudbury	17,659	May 7 7:30 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 322 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA 01776	7	14	100	10 minutes Pro, 5 Other	Town Meeting Time	www.sudbury.ma.us
Bedford	13,320	March 26 7:30 pm	10 Mudge Way, Bedford, MA 01730	12	20	100	Twice per article	Town Meeting Time	www.town.bedford.ma.us
Concord	17,668	April 23 7 pm	22 Monument Square, P. O. Box 535, Concord, MA 01742	9	20	None	5 to 8 minutes Pro, 4 Other	Town Meeting Time	www.concordma.gov
Westwood	14,618	May 7 7:30 pm	Office of the Town Clerk, 580 High Street, Westwood, MA 02090	14	20	175			www.townhall.westwood.ma.us
Maynard	10,106	May 21 7 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 195 Main Street, Maynard, MA 01754	11	25	100	Twice per question		www.townofmaynard-ma.gov/
Dover	5,589	May 7 7 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 5 Springdale Avenue, Dover, MA 02030	11	27	175			www.doverma.org
Ashland	16,593	May 2	101 Main Street, Ashland, MA 01721	14	30	5			www.ashlandmass.com
Stow	6,590	May 7 7 pm	Town Clerk, 380 Great Road, Stow, MA 01775-2127	14	30	None	15 minutes Pro, 3 Op, 5 Amend	Town Meeting Time	www.stow-ma.gov
Hudson	19,063	May 7 7:30 pm	78 Main Street, Hudson, MA 01749	15	32	150	Twice per question	Town Meeting Time	www.townofhudson.org
North Reading	14,892	June 4 7 pm	Town Clerk / Registrars, 235 North S., North Reading, MA 01864	24	32	150 for STM Only	5 minutes		www.northreadingma.gov
Sharon	17,612	May 7 7 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 90 South Main Street, Sharon MA, 02067	22	35	None	Prescheduled Pro & Op, No Limits	Town Meeting Time	www.townofsharon.net/
Holliston	13,547	May 7 7:30 pm	703 Washington Street, Holliston, MA 01746	16	36	100	Twice Up to 15 minutes Total		www.townofholliston.us
Littleton	8,924	May 7 7 pm	Board of Registrars, 37 Shalluck Street, Littleton, MA 01460	19	36	?	More Than Once After Everyone Else	Town Meeting Time	www.littletonma.org
Hopkinton	14,925	May 7 7 pm	18 Main Street, Hopkinton, MA 01748	20	37	100	Twice, 10 minutes each time		www.hopkinton.org
Medfield	12,024	April 30 7:30 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 459 Main Street, Medfield, MA 02052	15	37	250	2 minutes Pro & 2 Op		www.town.medfield.net
Foxborough	16,865	May 14 7:30 pm	Town Clerk, 40 South Street, Foxborough, MA 02035	27	39	100		Town Meeting Time	www.townoffoxborough.us
Millis	7,891	May 14 7:30 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 900 Main Street, Millis, MA 02054	18	39	4% of voters for STM			www.millis.org
Tyngsborough	11,292	May 15 7 pm	Town Clerk's Office, 25 Bryants Lane, Tyngsborough, MA 01879	31	40	?		Robert's Rules	www.tyngsboroughma.gov

Sorted By Town Meeting Date & Time

<u>Town</u>	2010 Population Per US Census: 5,000 to 20,000	Annual Town Meeting	Location
Lincoln	6,362	March 24 9:30 am	Brooks Auditorium
Bedford	13,320	March 26 7:30 pm	Bedford High School, 9 Mudge Way
Wayland	12,994	April 9 7:30 pm	Wayland Middle School
Concord	17,668	April 23 7 pm	Concord-Carlisle Regional High School
Medfield	12,024	April 30 7:30 pm	Ames Clark Kingsbury High School
Ashland	16,593	May 2	Ashland High School, 65 East Union Street
Dover	5,589	May 7 7 pm	
Stow	6,590	May 7 7 pm	Hale School, 55 Hartley Road
Sharon	17,612	May 7 7 pm	Sharon High School
Littleton	8,924	May 7 7 pm	Charles Forbes Kaye Gymnasium
Hopkinton	14,925	May 7 7 pm	
Weston	11,261	May 7 7:30 pm	High School Auditorium & Gymnasium
Sudbury	17,659	May 7 7:30 pm	Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School, 390 Lincoln Road, Sudbury
Westwood	14,618	May 7 7:30 pm	
Hudson	19,063	May 7 7:30 pm	Hudson High School
Holliston	13,547	May 7 7:30 pm	High School Auditorium & Gymnasium
Foxborough	16,865	May 14 7:30 pm	
Millis	7,891	May 14 7:30 pm	Middle / High School Auditorium
Tyngsborough	11,292	May 15 7 pm	
Maynard	10,106	May 21 7 pm	Fowler School, 22-98 Tiger Drive
North Reading	14,892	June 4 7 pm	High School, Daniel Shay Auditorium

Sources:

- 1) <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/census/middlesex.htm> norfolk.htm & suffolk.htm. This has MA cities & towns by county with 2000 and 2010 Population per the US Census.
- 2) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Municipalities_in_Massachusetts. This lists the 296 MA towns and 55 MA cities alphabetically with type (city or town), county, form of government, 2010 population and year founded.
- 3) <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elec/clickidx.htm>. This has an alphabetical Massachusetts City and Town Directory, with each town clerk office's address, phone, email address and town website.
- 4) Mapquest.com used for directions from Weston, MA town hall to other town halls with populations between 5,000 and 20,000 in Middlesex and Norfolk Counties with open town meetings, by miles and minutes.
- 5) Information regarding Quorums, Speaker Time Limits & Procedural Rules are from the Town websites.

ATTACHMENT 3

CONCORD TOWN MEETING

April 23, 2012

Jean Thurston

The meeting started a bit after 7:00 at the Concord/Carlisle High School auditorium. A Special Town Meeting scheduled for April 24 and then the second regular meeting on the 25th.

A large amount of printed material was available on tables outside the auditorium including the warrant, budget book and info on individual articles. On the website, there was a town meeting fact report, the warrant and considerable other material.

We registered as visitors and were given name badges and sat in the right rear section. The Selectmen, Finance Committee and other major committees sat at four tables at the front perpendicular to the stage. The Moderator and Town Clerk were at a long table on stage.

There is no quorum, but the Moderator did announce that there was one. Town Meeting Time is used.

There were 48 articles listed in the warrant, but the Moderator indicated that the Bd of Selectmen moved a Consent Calendar of routine articles(19) that had passed at several town meetings without comment and unanimously. If five people objected to any one article, it would be taken up separately. The Moderator then listed each article and briefly waited for objections (five people calling out "hold"). There were 2 or three single objections, and the Consent Calendar was passed. This saved a significant amount of time.

The motions were projected on a large screen up front and two smaller screens at the edge of the stage. The Moderator described each motion and who made it, but it was not read by anyone.

Time limits for speakers were 5 min. for proponents (except 7 min. for two more important articles) and 2 min. for opponents or for questions or comments. A small square at the upper right of the screen showed the countdown and no one was more than 15 sec. over except one presentation was 30 sec. over on a big article.

There were four microphones with no designation pro or con, but no portable mikes.

Voting was by holding up a turquoise square of paper about 8". This also served as a paper ballot if needed. Thus there was no need to estimate voice votes.

There was to be no new business introduced after 10:00 p.m.

Procedures of interest:

Paper squares for voting eliminates shouting and can be used for secret balloting. Time on the screen doesn't require bells or music. Consent Calendar saves significant time.

MAYNARD TOWN MEETING

FOWLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

MAY 21, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was held in the auditorium of the Fowler Middle School. The room easily accommodated the 150 or so persons who showed up. Two podiums were set up on either side of the stage. The Town Moderator spoke from the podium at the right. The podium at the left was designated for town officials. On the stage were seated the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Town Counsel, the Secretary to the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Director, the Finance Committee, and the School Committee.

There were three microphones up front. There was no "Pro" or "Con" designation. The mikes were placed so that speakers stood with their backs to the audience, facing town officials on stage. At the outset, the Moderator explained that anyone could come forward, identify himself, and be recognized. Each speaker would be permitted to make one comment or ask one question, after which he or she would have to give the floor to the next person in line. The previous speaker could go to the end of the line and asked to be recognized again if he wished make a further comment. This rule did not really come into play last night, as there were never more than two speakers at the mike, and the Moderator gave each leeway to ask follow-up questions. I was seated in the section of the auditorium reserved for guests. The Moderator announced that guests would speak "only if invited, and only on specific topics." While I was there, no guest asked to be recognized.

There were no time limits announced. Nevertheless, with the exception of the budget presentation, the presenters' remarks did not exceed five minutes.

The Town Warrant was 21 pages, plus a 15-page Appendix and contained 21 Articles. The Special Town Meeting Warrant was included in the booklet. That meeting was scheduled to follow at 9:30 p.m. The Moderator explained the vote necessary to carry each article, and how each vote was to be taken, either by voice, or by secret ballot. This information was summarized at the front of the Town Warrant, and will be copied and distributed at tonight's meeting.

Before the Warrant articles were considered, the Selectmen honored three town employees for outstanding service, and several "Ad Hoc" committees made interim reports to the town. Again, the speakers were making an obvious effort to keep their remarks brief. A few slides were shown and we were referred to the town website for the full report of each committee.

As the Town Meeting began, the first Motion considered was the Motion to waive the reading of the Warrant, which passed. This made unnecessary the reading of each article. There is a Table of Contents in the front of the Warrant and the Articles were referred to by number. If a paper ballot vote was required each person marked his vote on a tablet of blanks handed out at the check-in desk. Seven Counters went up and down the aisles with long handed collection baskets and received the ballots. The ballots were then tallied and the count reported to the Town Clerk. As this was going on, the next article was under discussion. There was no delay in the meeting.

The Proposed FY 2013 Budget was given a great deal of attention. It should be noted that on May 14, 2012, a budget hearing was held to "discuss with any citizen who desires further information, as to the recommended budget and capital plan and any special Articles in the Warrant to which the Finance Committee has made a recommendation" The Warrant included a budget Appendix comparing the previous year's expenditures with the requests for FY 2013. There was an itemized breakdown for each department. The Chairman of the Board of Selectmen went through this, line by line, explaining where money had been saved and describing projected increases. His presentation required about 25 minutes. Then the Chairwoman of the School Committee spoke and explained the school budget in a similar manner, which required about 15 minutes. It should be noted that the Town Meeting was not able to vote on line items in the budget, only on the total appropriation. The budget passed. I left at 9:10 p.m.

What I liked:

1. The Motion to Waive the Reading and the Table of Contents in the Warrant for easy reference.
2. The informational Appendices in the back of the Warrant.
3. The Auditorium was well lit (why is ours always so dark?).
4. The visible presence of town officials on stage. At our Town Meeting we never see them.
5. Microphones set up so that people faced the presenter of the article, not the audience. This arrangement encouraged speakers to formulate questions, rather than simply express dissatisfaction. The questions and answers were informative.
6. The second podium simplified and streamlined the debate. While the Town Moderator stood at the other podium, ready to rule on a point of order, if necessary, the speaker and the relevant town official could address one another directly. Once a speaker had been recognized, the Moderator permitted an informal question and answer exchange without further intervention. Had there been a controversial issue, my guess is the Moderator would have assumed a more active role, curtailing the debate to

allow everyone a chance. For last night's meeting, however, that wasn't necessary and the Moderator minimized the formalities and let the discussion flow naturally. Flexibility can be a good thing.

Submitted by,

Nancy Benotti

May 22, 2012



Town Meeting Presentation Guide

with

Sample Presentation

and

Presentation Template

Stow, Massachusetts

Presentation Guide Purpose:

This Presentation Guide and the two related Sample Presentations were designed for a first-time speaker/presenter, but even experienced presenters may find the information contained in these documents to be a valuable refresher. The Presentation Guide was prepared for the benefit of all who will be collecting and preparing information as an article sponsor for presentation to Stow town meetings. The Presentation Template has supporting information that describes how to install and operate the PowerPoint template when you choose to import your own presentation into the recommended presentation format. This information is attached to this document. Portions of the Presentation Guide and the Sample Presentations may also be of use to all other town officials and voters wishing to speak in favor or opposed to an article. The Presentation Guide, Presentation Template, and the Sample Presentations are available from the Town Clerk in softcopy. These materials may be reproduced and given to anyone having a use for them.

The information available for your use consists of the following documents and files:

<u>File Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Stow TM Presentation Guide.doc	The Town Meeting Presentation Guide
Town Meeting-Gov.ppt	Sample Presentation for town officials and board members (includes Template)
Town Meeting-Voter.ppt	Sample Presentation for voters (Includes Template)

The Town Clerk will serve as the focal point for the distribution of these documents and files and for all information and questions related to acquiring and using these items. The Town Clerk may also redirect you to another town employee to provide assistance or to answer your questions. The Town Clerk may be reached at 978-897-4514.

If you have suggestions to improve this Presentation Guide or the Sample Presentations or believe that additional information should be included that would be helpful to other presenters, please contact the Moderator, c/o Stow Town Building, 380 Great Road, Stow, MA 01775-0261.

Edward E. Newman
Moderator
Town of Stow

Introduction:

Presenting effectively at a Stow town meeting requires preparation. This Presentation Guide is designed to assist you with your preparation by providing:

1. The Presentation Template for use in formatting presentations,
2. A Sample Presentation to use as a model in creating your own presentation,
3. A set of PowerPoint properties for visual presentations that, if used, can be clearly seen by voters in the auditorium,
4. A list of considerations or tips to use when preparing for your presentation,
5. Information to assist you in making your presentation at town meeting, and
6. A description of the audio and visual technology that will be available for your use at town meeting.

The Sample Presentation for town officials' use is attached to this Presentation Guide.

Presentation Template Overview:

A Presentation Template, created using Microsoft PowerPoint 95 & 97, is available for the use of town officials and voters in preparing visual presentations for town meeting. Follow the installation instructions attached to this document to install and use the Presentation Template. After you have created your PowerPoint presentation you would import the Presentation Template included in the Sample Presentation to format your presentation.

The Presentation Template has been tested for "view ability" in the Hugh Mill Auditorium and incorporates all of the presentation standards listed in this Presentation Guide. Presenters who choose to use the Presentation Template should feel comfortable that the type style, font size, color selection, etc., and the suggested sequence of charts can be used to develop a presentation that can be seen by the voters in the auditorium. The Template can also be used as a guide to organize the sequence and content of your presentation slides.

The Presentation Template can be used to develop a black and white or a color slide presentation that requires the use of an overhead slide projector or a PC attached to a video projector. For town officials and board members, the Presentation Template and the Sample Presentation are installed on several PCs in the Town Office Building. For voters, the Presentation Template and Sample Presentation are available on a diskette that can be obtained from the Town Clerk in exchange for a blank diskette. The Presentation Template is available in two versions:

1. **Town Meeting-Gov.ppt** is for use by town officials and board members and contains the Stow town seal on each slide.
2. **Town Meeting-Voter.ppt** is for use by voters and does not contain the Stow town seal on any of the slides.

Plan to obtain the Presentation Guide and Sample Presentation well in advance of the town meeting to allow time to incorporate these recommendations into your presentation.

Presentation Template Format

The Presentation Template was created with the assumption that voters expect consistent information during an article discussion to make an informed decision. The Presentation Template assists the town official and voter by providing a suggested outline for structuring the presentation into a logical sequence and format. Your presentation should contain a slide for each of the following information topics:

1. Title Chart - Supporting/Opposing article number, the committee or voter name sponsoring the article, and the presenter's name(s),
2. Overview of the Issue(s),
3. Benefits of Following the Recommendation,
4. Impact of NOT Following the Recommendation,
5. Financial impact (not required in all cases), and
6. Summary - Action requested of the voters to address the issue

You have two options to select from when using the Presentation Template:

1. Copy the appropriate Sample Presentation file onto your PC and simply replace the data with the information related to your article, or
2. If you have created your own PowerPoint presentation, import the Presentation Template. Note that you will need to check each slide for formatting conflicts after the import.

Next, print two copies of your presentation (one for each of the two possible meeting locations) on slide transparencies and paper (optional for handouts) and you are all set to make your presentation. If you wish to use color highlighting in your presentation, the printer you use must be capable of printing color slides. Bring a diskette containing your presentation and the two sets of your slide presentation (transparencies) to town meeting. Be sure to label the diskette with your name, phone number, and file name(s). Additionally, you may prepare a diskette with a copy of your presentation and deliver it to the Town Clerk up to 24 hours prior to the start of the town meeting. Prior to the meeting, the Town Clerk will attempt to load your presentation onto the PC to be used at town meeting. All softcopy presentation files which will use the Town PC at town meeting must conform to the following file naming convention: **ART NN Ill.ppt**, where "NN" is the Article Number and "Ill" are the presenters' initials. For example, ART 05 JCO.ppt would be Article 5 prepared by John C. O'Bored.

If a paper handout of the presentation is to be made available to voters at the meeting, you are responsible for providing the copies. The presentation handouts may be left at the Voter Information Table prior to the start of the meeting. All documents shall have printed the article number in the upper left-hand corner and the sponsor's name, address and telephone number in the upper right-hand corner of the document.

Visual Presentation Properties:

Presentations should be created so that they may be clearly seen by all voters in the auditorium or any overflow area. The following presentation properties have been tested on the overhead slide projector and PCs available at town meeting and projected onto the large screen at the front of the stage:

<u>Attributes</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
✓ ALL SLIDES:	
♦ Background color	White
♦ Titles	Blue
♦ Body of Text	Black
♦ Footer	Arial, 10 point, black (file name, page number)
♦ Left Margin	1.5 inches

✓ **TITLE SLIDE (consists of three formats)**

TITLE - "Stow Town Meeting"

♦ Font Name	Arial
♦ Font/Point Size	36
♦ Attributes	Bold
♦ Color	Blue

SUBTITLE - "Supporting (Opposing) Article X"

♦ Font Name	Arial
♦ Font/Point Size	28
♦ Attributes	Normal
♦ Color	Black

PRESENTER - "John C. O'Bored"

♦ Font Name	Times New Roman
♦ Font/Point Size	24
♦ Attributes	Normal
♦ Color	Black

✓ **OTHER SLIDES**

TITLE - "Overview of the Issue(s)"

♦ Font Name	Arial
♦ Font/Point Size	32
♦ Attributes	Bold
♦ Color	Blue

BULLETS - "This situation needs...."

♦ Font Name	Arial
♦ Font/Point Size	28
♦ Attributes	Normal
♦ Color	Black

SUB-BULLETS - "without these changes...."

- ♦ Font Name Arial
- ♦ Font/Point Size 24
- ♦ Attributes Bold
- ♦ Color Black

You are free to use any document attributes of your choosing. However, when you choose attributes other than the recommendations outlined above, presentation quality may degrade. Caution, fewer words on a slide may present a clearer message to the voter

Attached to this Town Meeting Presentation Guide is a Sample Presentation for use by town officials that is formatted in the suggested sequence and style outlined above.

Preparing for the Presentation:

Several days prior to town meeting, the Moderator schedules the "STOWS" meeting (**Stow Town Officials Work Session**) to discuss the procedures for the upcoming meeting and to identify and address questions/issues. The notice of the meeting date, time and location is posted at the Town Office Building. All article sponsors and speakers for the town meeting are encouraged to attend the STOWS meeting.

At the STOWS meeting the overhead slide projector and the Town's PC and video projector (800x600 pixels) may be available to town officials and voters to test their presentations. Please let the Town Clerk know if you will require the use of the equipment at the STOWS meeting and we will attempt to accommodate your request. The overhead slide projector and PC will also be available in the auditorium prior to the opening of the town meeting session. Presentations may be loaded onto the Town's PC up until thirty minutes prior to the start of any town meeting session. If you plan to use the Town's PC for your presentation, you should plan to load your file onto the Town's PC and test your presentation during either of these two times. You may use your own PC but you should plan to test your hookup with the Town's projection equipment up until thirty minutes prior to the opening of town meeting. The town makes available a projector with a resolution of 600x800 pixels to attach to the PC. If you are using your own PC please verify that your PC monitor resolution is set to 600x800 pixels (My Computer, Control Panel, Display, Settings, and then select the pixel density to 800x600). You are encouraged to take these opportunities to test your visual materials and practice your presentation. To help us plan for the expected use of the town PC, you should contact the Town Clerk several days prior to town meeting to advise the Clerk that you plan to use the Town PC for your presentation.

Remember to check with the Moderator well in advance of town meeting to determine the amount of time you will have to deliver your presentation. During your preparation, you should time yourself to make sure that you will not exceed the allotted presentation time.

Making a Presentation:

If you are making a presentation using slide transparencies and the overhead projector, you should have an associate work with you to position / remove / advance your slides during your presentation. Be sure that you have practiced your presentation with your associate. Stand to the side of the projector so that you are not visually blocking the viewing of any of the presented material. In the event that the number of voters attending a town meeting session causes us to use an overflow area, you are responsible for having a second copy of the slides available and an associate to handle the slides in the overflow area.

If you are making a presentation using the Town PC, plan to have your presentation loaded prior to the start of the meeting so that the voters are not waiting while you load your presentation. Also, have an associate operate the PC to sequence / advance your presentation. Be sure that you have practiced your presentation with your associate. You should also have two copies of overhead slide transparencies available and a diskette containing your presentation in the event that the Town PC is unavailable in the auditorium or if a second meeting location is required. You are responsible for having an associate available to handle the slides in the overflow area.

You will have a microphone available during your presentation. Make sure that the microphone is "ON" before you start to speak. Place the microphone 4-6 inches below your lips and speak into the microphone in a normal tone. The Moderator will advise you if the voters are unable to hear you. If you turn your head away from the microphone to look at the screen be sure to reposition the microphone as you turn your head so that your voice remains at a constant volume level as you address the meeting.

Available Technology:

The town has PCs and color printers available for use by town officials and town boards capable of printing documents or color slides in several offices. The Sample Presentation and Presentation Template are installed on these machines and available to create and print your presentations. Town officials may create either black and white and/or color slides or a diskette with their presentation. You will need to schedule use of these machines with department personnel.

For voters, the Presentation Guide, Sample Presentation and Presentation Template are available. If you would like these in softcopy format, you must provide the Town Clerk with a blank diskette. You will need to make your own arrangements for a PC to create your presentation and to prepare your slide transparencies or diskette for use at town meeting.

Summary:

Voters tend to remember what you say first and last, and how effectively you deliver your presentation. Your presentation slides should contain relevant information to

support the action you are asking the voters to take. Make certain that your statements and presentation clearly and succinctly deliver the appropriate message. Your presentation should provide sufficient details to voters so that they are prepared to make an informed decision, rather than conveying all that you know about your article.

Presentation Template

Installation/Operating Instructions

To use the Presentation Template, follow these steps:

PC Requirements:

- ✓ Microsoft 95 or newer Operating System
- ✓ Microsoft Office 95 or PowerPoint95 or newer version

Installation/Operating Instructions:

1. Load a copy of the template file (Town Meeting-gov.ppt or Town Meeting-voter.ppt) onto the hard drive of your PC. Remember its location.
2. Open a new presentation on your PC
3. Click "Format"
4. Select "Apply Design"
5. In the "Apply Design" window, bottom left field called "file type", use the pull down arrow to select "Presentation and Shows (*.ppt)"
6. Find the appropriate folder and select the Presentation Template file
7. Click "apply"
8. Verify the formatting/layout of each slide following the import

Alternatively, use the Sample Presentation included with the Presentation Guide. With this option, simply replace the sample text with your own words.

Sample Presentation

Notes:

1. Attached to the hardcopy version of the Presentation Guide is the Sample Presentation in the **Town Meeting-gov.ppt** format, which is available for use by town officials and town boards, and the Sample Presentation in the **Town Meeting-voter.ppt** format, which is for use by voters. The Sample Presentations are identical except that the town seal is eliminated from **Town Meeting-voter.ppt**.
2. The attached Sample Presentations were copied. Therefore, they do not include any of the color text that would be seen if a PC projected them.

To: WTMAC

From: Beverly Foster

The following information comes from my attendance at a Town of Hartford, Vermont information meeting and from Chuck Wooster, brought up in Concord, MA, Chairman of the Hartford Charter Commission. The meeting, one of three held on the Hartford warrant articles, replaces the traditional town meeting format of debate, discussion, and voting on warrant articles at one town meeting. Instead, Hartford has preliminary discussion and debate meetings to inform the voters, and then in March it holds an Australian secret ballot vote on all the warrant articles. In the event the articles do not pass at the March Australian secret ballot all day voting, a final attempt at passage occurs in the form of a town meeting in April such as the one Weston has annually.

I attended a Town of Hartford information meeting on Saturday, March 3, 2012, as an observer. Hartford contains the villages of White River, Hartford, Quechee, Wilder, and West Hartford. Population: approximately 10,000 with a school population of 2000 and \$24 M budgeted for schools. Only 300 to 400 people attended town meetings until three years ago . But when a new form of town meeting took place, starting in 2009, recommended by the Charter Commission, the budget and town issues garnered far more votes, such as the 2015 votes cast March 9th this year, by Australian secret ballot, and included town and primary elections. This meant that far more voted on all the budgetary warrant issues than voted in the traditional town meeting prior to 2009. [Unlike Town Meeting in Weston, Hartford had utilized secret paper ballots if three people had called for a paper ballot.]

The Charter Commission came about because many voters complained that too few people were making decisions for the town and attending town meeting. The Commission recommended and received the voters' approval to address the issues of low attendance and common complaints: Hartford, said the commission, should have preliminary discussion meetings on the issues before and after the warrant came out in January, with information meetings on School and non-school Budget discussions, along with Candidates' nights, as it did this year on February 27, 2012 and again on March 3rd where 150 were in attendance, periodically. There was no sign-in and candidate introductions were part of the meeting, moderated by the elected Moderator, utilizing RRO .

The March 6th eventual vote on the warrant articles by Australian secret ballot on all the warrant articles, took place 7AM until 7PM. If warrant articles had not passed by secret Australian ballot in March, then in April the traditional town meeting, like Weston's, would have taken place where issues would be openly debated and voted on the floor. But this year everything passed because among other reasons, Quechee experienced a 100 year flood requiring the rebuilding of a covered bridge, funded by a \$1+M bond which elicited great support to get it started and no town meeting need be held in April.

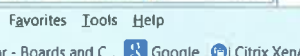
The February budget discussion took place 7PM and voting by secret ballot Saturday, March 6, at Hartford High School from 9AM to 7 PM. Interspersed in the budget discussions, school and general, people asked candidates questions. The PTO prepared lunch for \$5 at the March information meeting: chowders, hot dogs, soups, etc. The High school Junior class raised money by selling cookies and pastry, served throughout meeting. Chairman Wooster said food helped to bring out the voters.

ATTACHMENT 4

TOWN MEETING AND ELECTIONS HOME PAGE

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Moderator - Boards and C... Google Citrix XenApp - Logon MapQuest Maps - Driving ...



Town Meeting and Election

Johnson government is scheduled to hold its 2013 Town Meeting, Board of Selectmen, and Town Manager term. The Town Meeting is the highest body and most important of governing, elected at the Town Meeting, and Board of Selectmen. It is scheduled for the second Tuesday in May, the date of which will be a legal holiday, with the exception of Town Meeting.

The Annual Town Meeting is held on the second Tuesday in May, and is held in the evening at the Johnson High School Auditorium, 100 North Main Street, Johnson, Vermont. The meeting is held in the evening at the Johnson High School Auditorium, 100 North Main Street, Johnson, Vermont. The meeting is held in the evening at the Johnson High School Auditorium, 100 North Main Street, Johnson, Vermont.

Additional Town Meetings or Special Town Meetings may be called as needed during the year by the Board of Selectmen. Additional Special Meetings may be called as needed during the year by the Board of Selectmen.

Upcoming Town Meeting and Town Manager Election:

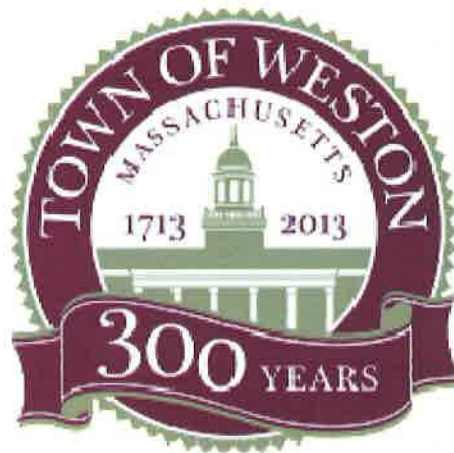
Meeting Name	Date	Location
Town Meeting	May 14, 2013	Johnson High School Auditorium
Board of Selectmen	May 14, 2013	Johnson High School Auditorium
Town Manager Election	May 14, 2013	Johnson High School Auditorium
Special Town Meeting	May 14, 2013	Johnson High School Auditorium
Special Town Meeting (2nd night of meeting)	May 14, 2013	Johnson High School Auditorium
Special Town Meeting (3rd night of meeting)	May 14, 2013	Johnson High School Auditorium

Additional Information:

- For more information, please contact the Town Clerk, 100 North Main Street, Johnson, Vermont 05460, or call 802-249-1234.
- For more information, please contact the Town Clerk, 100 North Main Street, Johnson, Vermont 05460, or call 802-249-1234.

ATTACHMENT 5

A BRIEF GUIDE TO WESTON TOWN MEETING PROCEDURE



**Thank you for your participation
at Town Meeting
It's your right and privilege**

Published December 2012

Thank you for participating in Town Meeting!

Town Meeting is the legislative session of Town government. All registered voters are considered Town Meeting members, with the ultimate democratic privilege and right to attend and vote on how our local government raises and spends your tax dollars.

Town Meeting can seem mysterious to newcomers, however, voters should not worry about being unfamiliar with parliamentary rules. We hope this pamphlet will help. Voters can always ask the Moderator to clarify a procedure, what the vote is for, or the effect of the passage of a pending motion. Or email the Moderator in advance with questions at moderator@westonmass.org.



Who can Speak?

All registered voters are entitled to speak according to the following procedures:

- **Pre-arranged article presentations are limited** to 10 minutes per speaker, with a maximum of 20 minutes for each article, whether for or against.
- **Comments from the floor are limited** to 5 minutes per turn, with the opportunity to speak again if there is new information to add after others have had a turn to comment. The Moderator will signal when a speaker has 30 seconds to conclude remarks.
- **Motions, presentations and questions will be made at the podium.** After a motion is made and seconded, the Moderator will first invite pre-arranged presenters to speak, and then alternate between the microphones for comments from the floor.
- **Comments from the floor can be made from any of the microphones in the auditorium,** including the podium. Town Meeting members should line up behind a microphone or hold their hand up for a page to bring them a portable mike, and wait until the Moderator recognizes them before speaking. A page will provide a portable mike for anyone unable for any reason to rise from their seat. In the event of overflow, voters in the gymnasium **must** come into the auditorium to speak.
- Only **Questions of Procedure** or **Points of Order** can be made from the floor without recognition by the Moderator. See below for details.
- **Before making your comment or question,** address the Moderator ("Mister" or "Madam" Moderator), state your name and address for the record, and wait for the Moderator to recognize you.

Anyone who plans to speak formally in favor of or against a motion, or for questions, is encouraged to contact the Moderator in advance at moderator@westonmass.org.

Town Counsel is available the night of the meeting to help prepare the wording or to advise on the procedure for making motions or amendments.



What is a Motion?

A "motion" is the formal term for taking action in a meeting. For example, discussion of an article begins with a motion. Specifically:

- A **main motion** proposes action under the article of the warrant being considered. They are the basic motions, around which others revolve. Motions must be "seconded" before they can be debated.
- A proposal to change the main motion is made by a **Motion to Amend**. This "primary amendment" may also be amended by a "secondary amendment." No further amendments are permitted.
- A **Motion to Adjourn** may be made at any time to a scheduled time, date and place.
- A **Motion to Dissolve** the meeting is in order when all articles in the warrant have been disposed of.
- A **Motion to Terminate Debate**, i.e. to "Move the Previous Question," is a call for an immediate vote.

Summary of Motions	Debatable	Vote Needed
Main Motions:		
Motion to take action under article	Yes	Majority or 2/3
Motion to take articles out of order	Yes	2/3
Motion to reconsider an article acted upon and disposed of	Yes	2/3
Subsidiary Motions:		
Motion to lay on the table (to kill the main motion)	No	2/3
Previous question (to end debate)	No	2/3
Motion to amend main motion	Yes	Majority
Privileged Motions:		
To dissolve	No	Majority
To adjourn to a fixed time or recess	No	Majority
Question quorum of 80	No	None
Fix time to (or at) which to adjourn	Yes	Majority



Who runs the meeting?

The Moderator is elected by Weston voters to preside and regulate the proceedings, decide all questions of order and make public declaration of all votes. You can help accomplish the business of the Town efficiently and democratically by being concise, avoiding points that have already been made; and being courteous to Town employees, volunteers and fellow voters. ***Speakers are required to address the Moderator (Mister or Madame); questions may be asked only through the Moderator; no one may address others directly or by name.***

No one should interrupt a speaker who has the floor except to raise a **"Question"** of Procedure or **"Point of order"** (see below). Any person must cease and yield the floor at the Moderator's request.

"Questions" may include

- What is being voted on?
- What is the effect of the passage of the pending motion?

Only the following may be asked as a **"Point of Order"**:

- Is the speaker entitled to the floor?
- Is the pending action, or what the speaker is saying or proposing, indecorous, frivolous, irrelevant, illegal or contrary to proper procedure?
- Can visibility or audibility be improved?

In addition, if any voter immediately doubts the Moderator's declaration they may call "division" and the Moderator will call for a standing or ballot count.



Who can vote?

All voters registered in the Town of Weston are eligible to vote. Others are welcome to attend Town Meeting, but will be separated from registered voters in a designated area. Children accompanying parents should be reminded to remain silent during the meeting and voice votes.



How does voting work?

All votes are taken first by a "Yes" and then by a "No" vote, while raising a voting card distributed to registered voters upon entry. For a simple majority vote, ***if any voter immediately doubts the Moderator's declaration of the vote***, they may call **"Division"** and the Moderator will call for a standing or ballot count. For motions requiring 2/3 majority, unless the vote is unanimous, there will be a standing or ballot count.